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"LET'S DO SOMETHING"
– Ulbricht to Erhard

It is high time for the two German states to take steps to overcome the present situation in Germany, and to reach a peaceful understanding, Walter Ulbricht, Chairman of the State Council of the German Democratic Republic, stated in a letter to West German Chancellor Ludwig Erhard on May 27th.

The letter repeated, in a consolidated form, various suggestions made by the German Democratic Republic in previous approaches to West Germany. The main proposals were:

1. The two German states should completely renounce nuclear weapons.

2. The two German states, together with the special territory of West Berlin, should establish joint commissions to deal with economic, cultural and technical contacts between the different parts of Germany.

3. The two German states should establish a "German Council" composed of equal numbers of parliamentarians from both states, which should help Germany to "grow together" again.

"I am convinced that a majority of the citizens of the two German states have a positive attitude towards these proposals", Walter Ulbricht states in his letter.

The GDR suggestion for the renunciation of nuclear weapons differed in one important respect from former proposals. In earlier bids, the GDR Government had urged that the two German states should sign a pact on the subject; to meet West German objections that they could not sign a pact together with the "non-existent" GDR, Chairman Ulbricht's latest letter suggests that the renunciation of nuclear arms should take the form of simultaneous but separate solemn declarations by the two states.

A West German Government spokesman announced on May 28th that Walter Ulbricht's letter had not been accepted in Bonn, and had been returned unopened.

Here are the main points made by Chairman Ulbricht in his letter to Chancellor Erhard:

"On January 6th I wrote to you suggesting an understanding on the measures to be taken to prevent nuclear war on German soil; you brusquely rejected this approach.

"The attitude adopted by you and your government in this matter obviously doees not measure up to the great responsibility which you and I bear for the future of the German nation. I made some serious and factual proposals, and your reaction to these proposals appears to show that you and your government are still pursuing a policy which widens the gap between the two German states and endangers peace in Germany and Europe. You cannot deny that the demand of your government for the restoration of the frontiers of 1937 is a revanchist demand; in addition you press for West German participation in a NATO multilateral nuclear force. You well know that this sharpens the situation; I much regret that you have taken this course.

"The seriousness of the situation leads me to appeal once more to your sense of national responsibility, and to propose that you and your government should re-assess your attitude and cooperate in preserving peace and overcoming the partitioning of Germany.

"We are now obviously approaching the end of the post-war period. The situation which arose after the war has become consolidated. The Soviet Union, the USA, and other states with differing social systems are increasingly endeavouring to coexist and to reduce the danger of nuclear war. A turning point in history is approaching. In the long run your government will not be able to block the international movement for the ending of the post-war period, and the sweeping away of the smouldering relics of the Second World War.

"The peoples want peace, but the policy of revenge pursued by your government threatens to convert the post-war period into a renewed pre-war period, something which is rejected by the peoples, including the people of the two German states.

"Why do you insist on remaining in the blind alley into which Adenauer led the German problem? Adenauer failed with this policy; do you wish to fail too?"

"You say that you do not want war, and I should like to believe you, but you identify yourself with revanchism, demand the frontiers of 1937, and arm for nuclear war. This makes it difficult to believe your claims to want peace.

"There can be no doubt that the millions you are devoting to armaments and revanche policy are being thrown away. Even a new war could not reverse the results of the Second World War; this is not only our deepest conviction, but the view of your NATO allies, the governments of the USA, Britain, France and many other lands.

"Neither now nor in the future can there be any progress in the German question without a relaxation in the relations between the two German states, and an understanding between them which can only be achieved on a basis of equality.

"For the past fifteen years the Bonn Government has vainly tried to undermine the GDR. You have managed to inflict great material

(cont. on next page)

Nuclear Renunciation–GDR Bid

In his letter to Chancellor Erhard, Walter Ulbricht suggested that the Governments of the two German states should make independent declarations to the following effect. The GDR would be glad to consider any other draft for such a declaration:

1. The two German states pledge themselves not to produce nuclear weapons in Germany or outside, with or without the aid of others.

2. The two German states pledge themselves not to acquire or accept nuclear weapons or blueprints for such weapons.

3. The two German states pledge themselves not to attempt in any form, directly or indirectly, to acquire control over nuclear weapons, singly or in alliance with other states.

4. The two German states pledge themselves not to participate in any way in nuclear weapon testing.

5. The two German states pledge themselves not to station nuclear weapons of any kind on their territory, nor to permit such stationing by third parties.

6. The two German states pledge themselves never to use nuclear weapons or cause them to be used by third parties.

damage upon the GDR; but you have not been able to shake the GDR and its government, and you will never be able to do so. The German Democratic Republic has grown stronger year by year, and has strengthened its international position. Your government is today further than ever from its goal of annexing the GDR, but you cling to this bad and foolish policy.

"I would ask you earnestly to consider the proposals which I made on January 6th for the prevention of a nuclear war in Germany. *(For text of these proposals, see box)*

"I am convinced that the deep division which exists between the two German states today will become a final and irreversible division if the German states and their governments cannot learn to live with each other in peace, to negotiate sensibly with each other, and to attach more importance to overcoming the partitioning step-by-step than to prestige, party-political and personal differences.

"The State Council, the People's Chamber and the Government of the GDR have always adopted this attitude. The citizens of the GDR support this policy, and I am convinced that the majority of the citizens of West Germany would support it too if they had the possibility of making a choice.

"You and your government claim that foreign powers, the four victorious powers of the Second World War, are responsible and competent for the solution of the German problem. But the relations between the German Democratic Republic and the West German Federal Republic are solely the responsibility of the German states, their governments and their parliaments. If, however, your government believes that it needs the permission of other states in order to negotiate with the Government of the GDR, then we must leave it up to you to get such permission. The German Democratic Republic needs no such permission. Article 1 of the Moscow State Treaty of 1955 lays down that the GDR can decide freely and without foreign intervention in all questions regarding its relations with the West German Federal Republic.

"In order to overcome the partitioning of Germany it is necessary for the West German Federal Republic to renounce a policy of revanchism, to renounce nuclear arms, including participation in the NATO multilateral force, and to reach an understanding on a peace treaty which would make West Berlin a neutral Free City.

"All-German commissions, composed of representatives of the two governments and the West Berlin Senate, would be very helpful in overcoming the partitioning of Germany. Such commissions could be established for culture, education, legal matters, economic, scientific and technical cooperation, trade and sport, and could do useful work. They could seek for solutions acceptable to both sides, and submit suggestions to the governments. The 'Christmas Pass' arrangement concluded between the GDR Government and the West Berlin Senate in December 1963 shows that mutually acceptable results can be obtained despite widely differing political ideas.

"Professor Erhard, both of us observed how the First World War was prepared, and how it ended, the sufferings which it brought to the German people, and how Germany became smaller as a result of the lust for conquest of its rulers.

"We both of us observed how the Second World War was prepared and launched, the great suffering which it brought, and the results for Germany of the revanche and conquest plans of the ruling circles. Once again Germany became smaller. In addition, the circles which still rule today in West Germany, with the effective aid of the imperialist western powers, divided it into two German states and the special territory of West Berlin.

"I do not hold you personally responsible for the First or Second World War, but the circles of German monopoly capital and German militarism which stand behind you bear the full responsibility. The policy pursued by your government brings about the danger of a Third World War, which our nation would proably not survive.

"This year we mark the 50th anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War and the 25th anniversary of the outbreak of the Second World War. Should this not be an additional reason why the German states and the German nation should aim to become a firm factor of peace in Europe?

"The People's Chamber, the State Council, and the Government and people of the GDR are ready to strike out, together with West Germany, along the road to peace, rapprochement and understanding. I am convinced that the citizens of the GDR and the great majority of the citizens of the Federal Republic are wholeheartedly in agreement with such a policy."

The Questions for Germans

Walter Ulbricht, in his letter to Chancellor Erhard asked the governments, parliaments, parties and orgnisations in the two German states to give their answer to the following three questions:

1. Are you in favour of renunciation of all nuclear arms, step-by-step controlled disarmament, and reduction of arms spending in the two German states?

2. Are you in favour of an understanding between the two German states and West Berlin, and their equal co-operation in measures aimed at overcoming partitioning and creating a united, peaceloving Germany?

3. Are you in favour of the establishment of a German Council, composed of equal numbers of representatives from the People's Chamber of the German Democratic Republic and the Parliament of the Federal Republic, in the interest of overcoming partitioning and bringing the two German states and West Berlin gradually together?

Scotland Yard Was Baffled

By Frederick Ford

In hundreds of detective stories the inspector from Scotland Yard confesses himself baffled; he only manages to track down the criminal when he is aided by an amateur detective.

Immediately after the war, Chief Inspector Rudkin of Scotland Yard, accompanied by Sergeant Chutburn, tried to find the nazi officer who had run the biggest forgery operation in history — the wartime forging of Bank of England notes to a total face value of £134 million.

Now, thanks to the investigations of Julius Mader, GDR journalist who specialises in the secret history of the nazi period, the multi-million pound forger has been found. He is SS Major Bernhard Krüger, who commanded a team of concentration camp inmates who were forced to do the forgery under pain of death. He was not only a forger, but a murderer. Some of the prisoners who worked for him survived the war, and their statements give precise details of at least four of their fellow prisoners who were murdered on Krüger's orders.

All available post-war accounts of the gigantic forgery agreed that Krüger had disappeared without a trace, but Julius Mader finally located him, living peacefully under his own name in West Germany, and filed murder charges against him with the West German authorities. (GERMAN REPORT gave first details of this step on January 24th 1964).

After a bit of hesitation, and shifting the responsibility from one office to another, the West German legal authorities finally opened official investigations against Krüger on charges of murder, on March 6th this year. Krüger is now living at Martin Luther Strasse 29, Stuttgart-Korntal, and the investigations are in the hands of Public Prosecutor Wolters, of Landgericht Göttingen.

This is where Chief Inspector Rudkin of Scotland Yard might well come into the story again; he followed Krüger's trail round Europe in 1945 and 1946 when the clues were still warm; he met and interrogated many of Krüger's concentration camp victims when they still had the details hot in their memories.

During the war, the British Government made a solemn public pledge to track down nazi criminals to the ends of the earth. Krüger has been tracked down (by an amateur detective); now Scotland Yard could do its part by placing any evidence it holds at the disposal of Public Prosecutor Wolters in Göttingen, West Germany.

And the Bank of England might be able to help too. Mr. Reeves, of that august institution, chased all over Europe together with Chief Inspector Rudkin in 1945; his files on "Operation Bernhard", the nazi code name for the forgery operation, would probably help the prosecution.

*

A friend in the United States has provided me with some additional information on "Operation Bernhard", found in an article by US Major J. McNally, published in "Reader's Digest" in July 1952. Major McNally, who headed the US team tracking Krüger in 1945, writes:

"I called my British colleagues in Frankfurt, and directly afterwards had a telephone call direct from the Bank of England... Soon a representative of the Bank arrived from London, a tall, angular and reserved gentleman named Reeves.

"From that moment Reeves, three detectives from Scotand Yard and I collaborated in piecing together the fantastic story of Operation Bernhard."

After describing how Major Krüger assembled his prisoner forgers in Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp, turned out fake notes with a face value of 140 million pounds, and was then forced to move to the Austrian Alps, the US author continues:

"It was April 1945 before Operation Bernhard was ready to set up its presses in Gallery 16 behind Redl Zipf (in Austria). By that time American troops were already closing in on the redoubt...

"Late one day Major Krüger — in a fast Alfa Romeo convertible and accompanied by a striking blonde — roared into the concentration camp at the mouth of the Redl Zipf cave. Hurriedly he gave orders from Himmler himself: Every trace of Operation Bernhard was to be obliterated. All records were to be destroyed, fake currency and unprinted bank-note paper burned, plates and dies sunk in the deepest part of nearby Lake Toplitz. All 140 members of Operation Bernhard were to be taken to the Ebensee concentration camp and killed.

"The Major, composed and polite as always, apologised for not being able to supervise the details himself. He had, he said, urgent business elsewhere... The car streaked away in the direction of Switzerland. Master counterfeiter Krüger has never been heard of since, despite the concentrated efforts of half a dozen police forces to find him.

"Inquiries in Redl Zipf revealed that all the men who had worked in the subterranean factory had been taken to the extermination camp at Ebensee, 40 miles away, just before the German surrender. We got to Ebensee fast. But every one of the counterfeiters was gone. The commandant there, knowing that American troops were already in the area, had pretended to accept the order to gas all 140 men, but had taken no action. When the camp was liberated, the counterfeiters had simply walked out, each in his own direction."

Why Pick on Me? — SS Officer

After dilly-dallying for over four years, the West Berlin authorities have finally arrested a police officer on charges of mass murder in the occupied Soviet Union in 1941—42. The arrested officer was Hans-Joachim Sommerfeld; he held the post of captain in the "morals" branch of the police force.

In January 1960 Sommerfeld was identified as a former SS lieutenant in an Einsatzkommando, or execution squad, on the Eastern Front. There is no shadow of doubt about the tasks which were performed by Einsatzkommandos; they were purely and simply murder squads, which roamed the countryside behind the Wehrmacht, killing off Jews and other people classified as "sub-humans".

Despite his identification as officer of such a squad, Sommerfeld was not even sacked from the police; he was "suspended pending investigations" but continued to receive his salary. Finally, on May 13th, Sommerfeld was arrested, and will perhaps one day face a court to answer for his part in the murders of at least two thousand people.

Sommerfeld was reported to be upset at his arrest. "There are plenty of other SS officers in the police; why did they have to pick on me?" he asked arresting policemen.

Realism in W. German Press

Papers Ask: "Is All-or-Nothing Policy Sensible?"

Realistic assessments of the present situation in Germany are gradually becoming more common in some sections of the West German press. Here is an interesting article published on May 21st by the "Frankfurter Rundschau", West German daily which gives general support to the policy of the Social Democrats:

A French proverb states that to govern is to look forward. Some people in the Federal Republic talk and act as though the art of government was to look backwards: for instance in the question of German reunification.

They look back to the height of the Cold War, when everything appeared so simple, when it was possible to pursue a policy of "all or nothing", and when it appeared possible to dream of an unconditional surrender of the Soviets in eastern Europe. In the case of German reunification this all-or-nothing policy has led to nothing, but this does not prevent many people from clinging to it.

Nobody can see the future, and nothing is impossible in politics. Statesmen may die, there could be revolutions. It is not impossible that there might be a German reunification in the next few years; in this case the all-or-nothing politicians would have been right.

But anyone possessed of his five senses, who does not chase will-o'-the-wisps, but who analyses things as they really are, knows that the realities of the world political situation today make it unlikely that there will be a German reunification for a long time to come. Anyone who refuses to recognise this does not possess the first prerequisite of a responsible politician: a sense of reality.

If there is such a great probability that the all-or-nothing policy will come to nothing, then something else is needed, something which is more probable. Anyone who considers this will find to his astonishment that the "possible" conforms with the "probable", with the probable development of West-East policies, if we ignore China. Let us formulate this negatively for a start: German reunification is, in the near future, not possible and not probable. When will a German statesman finally find the courage to tell the German people this?

On the positive side, what is possible is a normalisation of conditions in the GDR, and a normalisation of the relations between the Federal Republic and the GDR; the first is a necessary condition for the second. Normalisation would then mean the possibility to travel back and forth without fear and without particular difficulty, the free exchange of newspapers and literature, and so on.

This state of affairs is with great probability the only thing which can be achieved in the foreseeable future, perhaps in this century. It would therefore be logical to devote all efforts to bringing about this state of affairs. And the positive factor is that relations between "the West" and the Soviet Union and eastern Europe appear to be moving in this direction, and Washington has made it its aim to achieve this state of affairs.

This change in American policy has nothing to do with sympathy or antipathy towards Germany. It is simply a product of the changing political reality. With great probability this American policy with regard to Germany will in the long run be more productive than the previous policy, which wanted everything and won nothing. Anyone who wants to complain that this new policy will freeze the status quo in Germany and Europe should first explain his recipe for "liberating" eastern Europe with living beings in it, and not nuclear corpses. But in reality it is not a question of freezing, but of thawing, and this is what some of our all-or-nothing prophets are afraid of, for they fear that some things will "thaw" in the west too.

Anyone who has studied recent statements by Johnson, Fulbright, Rusk, and other American politicians, and who has soberly analysed the change in East-West relations must recognise that this policy is, for the time being, the only probable and the only possible one. Johnson's suggestion that Bonn should take into account the Soviet anxiety about Germany is a milestone in America's German policy. In the long run realities are more important than illusions. Today the probable and the possible developments in the German problem are the same thing, and this offers a great chance. This chance can only be seized by a forward-looking policy.

* * *

A similar line of reasoning is pursued by Sebastian Haffner, former West Berlin correspondent of the London "Observer", in an article in "Stern", biggest West German weekly, on May 31st:

"... In 1950/51, when it was decided to rearm the (West German) Federal Republic and include it in NATO, the Korean War had broken out, and the danger of world war had become even more acute. Those of us who remember those times and the threatening atmosphere, cannot blame Adenauer for trying to get under the American atomic umbrella. The speculation that, if it should come to a Third World War, it would be better for the Federal Republic to be one of the western victors, and thus cancel out the lost Second World War, was not absolutely fantastic...

"But by 1958 there was no need to be particularly clear-sighted to recognise the changed situation. It was absolutely apparent that a World War would now mean total destruction, and that both America and Russia were obliged to avoid it. By that time, anyone who believed that it was possible to pursue a private cold war with Russia on the basis of NATO, or even more to reverse the results of the Second World War, was no longer a realist, but a dreamer.

Today six more years have passed, and the Berlin crisis and the Cuba crisis have shown every last newspaper reader the mutual laming of the two nuclear giants. The Anglo-Saxon-Russian atomic entente has already taken on treaty form. "Relaxation of tension" and "coexistence" have taken the place of "cold war", and the military alliances on both sides are cracking at the seams. Only the Federal Republic is still living in the world of 1950, waging a cold war against world communism, basing itself on the cracked and shaky NATO, rearming as though war was round the corner and could be survived, and demanding things which could only be provided by a Third World War, such as the abolition of the German Democratic Republic and the restoration of the 1937 frontiers.

In 1950 it was possible to say that the Federal Republic was, with a sigh, adjusting itself to a Third World War, which appeared to be on

(cont. at foot of next col.)

WHAT MAKES SEEBOHM STICK?

By Eustace Gordon

The West German Transport Minister, Hans-Christoph Seebohm, is a recurrent embarrassment to the West German Government. He is not only a notably inefficient minister, but he keeps on making sabre-rattling speeches which spoil all the earnest efforts being made to present West Germany to the world as a reformed, peace-loving and eminently reasonable state.

"Patience is exhausted with Dr. Seebohm," stated "The Times" of London on May 26th, after his latest speech demanding the "return to Germany" of the Sudeten area of Czechoslovakia, grabbed by Hitler in 1938. (For extracts from the "Times" editorial, turn to page 94.)

But despite criticism at home and abroad, Herr Seebohm manages to cling to his post. In earlier years, many observers in Bonn believed that he was retained in the cabinet because he could "deliver the refugee vote" of Germans formerly resident in eastern Europe; but with the assimilation in the West German boom of the overwhelming majority of these resettlers, this reason is becoming increasingly invalid.

How does he manage to hang on to office? Well informed sources in Bonn have lately suggested that he has some sort of a hold over Chancellor Erhard, or other top government figures. Many prominent figures in the Bonn state are open to some sort of polite blackmail because details of their words and actions during the nazi period have not yet been exposed.

The suggestion is not so fantastic as it may appear at first sight; in the Bonn jungle, carefully preserved nazi files have played a part in making and breaking a number of political careers.

Some indication of the sort of hold which Seebohm may have over Erhard is given by the document presented on this page. It is the photograph of an article printed in the nazi business magazine "Markt und Verbrauch" (roughly "Market and Consumer") in April 1939. Ludwig Erhard, today West German Chancellor, was a member of the editorial board.

To understand this article, the background must be recalled: In September 1938, Hitler blackmailed the western powers into signing the Munich Agreement, under which the nazis could occupy vital areas of Czechoslovakia. In March 1939, ignoring his six-month old promise to respect the integrity of the remainder of Czechoslovakia, Hitler marched into Prague, and World War Two became inevitable.

Here are some further passages from the pro-Hitler article which appeared in Erhard's magazine:

"The Führer, without hesitation and with swift precision, took the steps which were necessary for the interest of the Reich ... These events were observed abroad with great agitation. This excitement was hard to understand, since after the reintegration of the Sudetenland it was clear to every unprejudiced ob-

(cont. from previous page)

its way. Today it is beginning to look — and not only from a Moscow viewpoint — as though the Federal Republic were trying to impose upon the western world, for its private purposes, a Third World War which nobody can wish for, and which would bring total destruction to the Federal Republic as the very first.

"It is not only that the Federal Republic is hindering any relaxation. In the west too the Federal Republic is isolating itself rapidly. The Federal Republic today no longer speaks the same language as America, Britain and France. The Federal Republic is living in another world, in the world of yesterday.

The Erhard Document

MARKT UND VERBRAUCH

Herausgegeben von
WILHELM VERSHOFEN
unter Mitwirkung von
KARL ALBRECHT, GUSTAV BAUM, GEORG BERGLER, LUDWIG ERHARD, EMIL FRATZ, RUDOLF GÖRNANDT, ALBERT HACKELSBERGER, OTTO JUNG, HEINRICH MAURACH, PAUL ROTT, FRANZ WARNKE, ADALBERT ZÖLLNER

IFW / Die Abrundung des deutschen Wirtschaftsgebiets

In einem unerhört dramatischen Geschehen hat sich um die Mitte des vorigen Monats das künstliche Gebilde des tschechoslowakischen Staates in seine Bestandteile

1939, Heft 4 MARKT UND VERBRAUCH

Es ist erstaunlich, daß man sich in der Welt darüber aufregen kann, daß Deutschland nach Osten hin seine wirtschaftliche Einflußsphäre so zu gestalten sucht, wie es seinen Lebensinteressen entspricht.

(translation)

MARKET AND CONSUMER

published by Wilhelm Vershofen
with the co-operation of ... Ludwig Erhard

Rounding-Out the German Economic Area

1939, No. 4

In very dramatic fashion, in the middle of last month (March 1939, ed.) the artificial construction of the Czechoslovak state fell apart ... It is astonishing that the world should be excited simply because Germany is attempting to shape its economic sphere of influence in a way which accords with its vital interests ...

server that Czechoslovakia was incapable of survival either reconomically or strategically... For the stability of the Reich, the steps taken by the Führer were the only possible ones. It is astonishing that the world should be excited simply because Germany is attempting to shape its economic sphere of influence in a way which accords with its vital interests."

There are two points of interest in this article, published in 1939 with Erhard's approval:

1. The article gives whole-hearted approval to nazi aggression against Czechoslovakia, and proclaims the principle that Germany can change its frontiers at will if this accords with "Germany's vital interests"; the same thinking governs present-day West German claims for the annexation of the German Democratic Republic and large parts of Poland.

2. The article states quite frankly that Hitler's "limited" aim of absorbing the Sudeten area was only a trick designed to make Czechoslovakia unviable and ripe for further German aggression; today ministers in Erhard's cabinet, particularly Seebohm, propagate the same aim and remain members of the cabinet.

The importance of this 1939 article should not be over-estimated; it does not make Erhard a nazi, but it shows that he was quite happy to support the nazi regime. But the fascinating question remains: has Seebohm got some more damning documents, which he is using to stay in office?

British & U. S. Comments on Seebohm

In mid-May, West German Transport Minister Hans-Christoph Seebohm made a much-noted speech calling for the "return to Germany" of the Sudeten area of Czechoslovakia, which was grabbed by Hitler in 1938. Here are comments on his speech from the leading newpapers of Britain and the United States:

"The Times", London, May 26th

"The political utterances of Dr. Hans Seebohm, the west German Minister of Transport, are like a recurring nightmare. Back in 1952 the Social Democrats were demanding his resignation because of remarks that showed no regret for Germany's past. He has continued to sound off regularly on the theme that Germany is properly defined as 'all areas where Germans once settled'. He has been even more embarrassing since becoming spokesman for the Sudeten German Association. Dr. Erhard has now reprimanded him for the latest outburst, in which he again demanded the return of the Sudetenland. But is a reprimand enough? Can the Government continue to tolerate a man who so regularly and determinedly undermines a large part of its foreign policy?

"In the past there were at least some arguments in favour of turning a blind eye to his antics... A new eastern policy is under way which is vital to the future of Europe and the western alliance. To tolerate Dr. Seebohm's views within the Cabinet is to cast doubt on the sincerity of the Government. Dr. Erhard deserves credit for going farther than Dr. Adenauer, who usually seemed unperturbed by Dr. Seebohm and his like, but he needs to go farther still. Patience is exhausted with Dr. Seebohm."

"The New York Times", International Edition, May 27th

"The extraordinary thing is not Seebohm's crassness; it is that Federal Germany's only two Chancellors, Adenauer and Erhard, retained this embarrassing man in their Cabinet. Erhard rebuked Seebohm for his latest outburst; but no mention was made of firing him.

"The coalition led by Christian Democrats wishes to continue attracting support among the millions of German refugees from Eastern Europe. But this is a short-sighted excuse. The best thing Bonn could do to reassure the world about its break with the past would be to oust Seebohm and thus discourage those who think like him.

"Erhard talks of starting negotiations with Prague for reciprocal trade missions and the official German spokesman says Bonn has no territorial claims on Czechoslovakia. But, despite frequent Czech demands, the Federal Republic has never officially renounced the 1938 Munich pact which gave Hitler Sudetenland...

"It is time for Dr. Erhard to clean his closet of inherited skeletons, including the fleshy one of Seebohm. President Johnson's suggestion that West Germany build closer bridges to the East cannot meet with much success if Erhard keeps ministers who claim territory belonging to the very states with which friendship is solicited.

"Bonn must eventually admit certain bleak facts that represent part payment for World War II. One of these is, as General de Gaulle told Chancellor Erhard earlier this year, that the permanent frontier between Germany and Poland henceforth will lie along the Oder-Neisse line. France already acknowledges this — partly because of its long ties of friendship with Poland. Another is that West Germany has no right to claim Old Volksdeutsch colonies and that if a ranking official makes such claims, he should not just be chided, he should be fired."

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Berlin W 8, Germany

We shall be pleased to mail sample copies of the paper to him or her.

Name .....

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GDR-Cyprus Line

"Interflug", GDR airways, inaugurated a regular air-line from Berlin-Schönefeld to Nikosia, capital of Cyprus, at the end of May.

Whitsun Rally Echo

Here is a scrap of a conversation between two young Germans, one from West Germany and the other an East Berliner, overheard in an East Berlin pub:

"Why did you come to the Whitsun youth rally? Were you really curious about life here, or did you just come for the fun of it? Weren't you just a bit nervous, after all you've heard about the GDR as a state full of hungry, terrorised people?"

"Perhaps I was a little frightened. Many people believe what they read in the papers. They know things are exaggerated, but some of it is bound to stick. I've been wanting for a long time to come and see for myself. When I got near the frontier I felt a little as if I were going into a forest at the dead of night; one doesn't believe in ghosts, but it gives one the shivers all the same."

"And how do you feel now?"

"Now I'm through the forest and there aren't any ghosts."

"How do you like our city?"

"It's not bad. There's a real holiday feeling about. But still, there's something missing. Everything is so solid. It reminds me of a still life picture. It looks beautiful but somehow rather ordinary. I had a look at the shop windows yesterday, for instance, and I missed all sorts of things which you can find everywhere in West Germany — leather jackets, really good modern shoes and men's suits and such things. I missed the glitter of the advertisements, too. Your shops have neon lights, of course, but they are somehow monotonous. I even saw a few multi-coloured neon signs, but they change colour too slowly, they're not exciting, you could go to sleep watching them."

"That's only one side of things..."

"Oh, I know what you're going to say. I have relatives living here, and I know what they earn. They pay much lower rents and bread is much cheaper here, too. But TV sets and things of that kind are much more expensive. Still, it looks as if everybody in East Germany can afford the ordinary necessities; you don't have such glaring differences, either. Things seem to be more evenly distributed. In West Germany the majority of workers live quite well, but we also have some real poverty. Still, anybody who earns a good wage can live better in the west than here, especially because he can buy so much on the hire-purchase system. We attach more importance to things like cars and refrigerators, too. But they certainly do a lot for you in East Germany in the way of education. Take the school we're sleeping in this week-end, for example. It's splendid. I picked up a leaflet about theatre season tickets..."

"Our children are encouraged to buy theatre season tickets at reduced prices — 2 or 3 marks for a good seat."

"That's extraordinarily cheap. We have to pay at least three times as much. Everything connected with education and culture and everyday needs seems to run very well here. But your newspapers are terrible. No pictures, no colour, and so bookish!"

"Yes, of course, we might do something to cheer them up. But aren't the contents the most important thing, after all? Where have you seen our newspapers, by the way?"

"I found several packages of old issues in the school where we're sleeping. They're full of reports, but there's nothing sensational about them. The readers' pages are quite interesting, though; they're much more outspoken than I should have thought possible, considering what we are always told about suppression of opinion and so on."

"Supposing you were faced with the choice of living here or in the Federal Republic, which would you choose?"

"Well... I have a feeling the future is on your side, and that would tempt me a bit. I could learn more here. But I'm earning good money now, and anybody who has a good job can live better in West Germany. He can have a car, go to Italy for his holiday, buy nice things and so on. That's pretty attractive, too, you know..."

(From a reader's letter in "BZ am Abend", East Berlin, May 26th 1964)

GDR's Off-Shore Rights

The Government of the GDR formally defined its claim on May 26th to mineral rights in that part of the Baltic which forms the off-shore area of the German Democratic Republic, as defined in the Geneva Convention of April 29th.

The GDR will permit no actions directed against its sovereign rights with regard to the off-shore area, it was officially announced. In January this year the West German Government, ignoring the present frontiers in Europe, laid claim to special rights in those areas of the Baltic which lie off the coasts of the GDR, plus most of the coast of Poland, and a short stretch of the Soviet coast off former East Prussia.

Off-shore rights have assumed particular importance in recent years, since technical developments made it possible to bore there for oil and gas. Rich fields have been discovered in the neighbouring North Sea off-shore areas, particularly off Holland.

Former Minister Released

Georg Dertinger, Foreign Minister of the GDR from 1949 to 1953, who was sentenced to 15 years imprisonment on espionage charges in 1954, was released on May 26th, it was officially announced in Berlin.

Dertinger was a leading member of the Christian Democratic Union of the GDR before his arrest. At his trial in June 1954 evidence was given that he had supplied state secrets to British and American intelligence organisations. On January 16th 1953, just after Dertinger had been arrested, Reuters New Agency reported from West Berlin: "German sources in West Berlin declared that for some time Dertinger had been supplying agents of the British Intelligence Service with internal information about East German and Soviet policy."

Medal for Sholokhov

The Government of the GDR decorated noted Soviet author Mikhail Sholokhov with the Gold Star of International Friendship on May 26th. This decoration, previously only conferred upon Paul Robeson, American singer, and Joris Ivens, Dutch documentary film maker, is the GDR's highest award for foreigners.

BERLIN NOTEBOOK

By John Peet

There is some fine political infighting going on behind the scenes in Bonn these days on the question of who should be elected as next President of the Federal Republic this July. The presidential post is not of great political importance — the president spends most of his time launching ships and hanging medals on visiting dignitaries — but there is considerable competition amongst ageing politicians to get the post, which brings satisfactory emoluments and a very good pension.

Bargains

Under the constitution of the Federal Republic, the president is not elected directly but at a joint meeting of the two houses of parliament; since none of the three parties in parliament have a clear majority in this assembly, there is plenty of room for bargains, particularly with the Free Democrats, who control the casting votes.

Another complicating factor is the religious angle; since the Federal Republic is roughly evenly divided between Protestants and Catholics, there is an unwritten law that the juicy posts shall be shared out on a confessional basis; Chancellor Erhard happens to be a Protestant, so this calls for a Catholic President. (Incidentally, this is going to throw the confessional-parity advocates into a fine tizzy if Social Democratic leader Willy Brandt ever wins a majority and becomes Chancellor; he is not a member of either confession.)

Politicians

I won't tire you by listing all the tired old politicians who are now scrapping away to try to get on the list of candidates; but there is one interesting point, which shows that world protests about old nazis in leading West German posts have had some effect. One of the most suitable candidates for the post would appear to be Kurt Georg Kiesinger, Prime Minister of the province of Baden-Württemberg. He is a Catholic, he is moderately popular, and he is a man of the world unlikely to make the silly gaffes which have marked the presidential period of Heinrich Lübke, the third-rate politician who holds the post at present.

But Kiesinger has been stricken from the lists, because he was a member of the Nazi Party, and because photographs are extant showing him decked out in the full panoply of a nazi diplomatic uniform, complete with swastika. Mindful of the scandals of Oberländer, Globke and a dozen others, which made it clear to the world that West Germany was still being run by old nazis, the men who run things in Bonn have regretfully erased Kiesinger from the short list. An old nazi is all right as a provincial prime minister, they feel, but it might be stretching things too far to make him head of state.

Pearls

Present betting is that poor old Heinrich Lübke will be re-elected to the post. He is not particularly bright, but that does not matter much. His statesman-like qualities can best be shown with a few extracts from a speech he held in Hamburg on March 13th this year; I solemnly swear I have not touched up these pearls of wisdom in any way:

"Then we got to Teheran, and I saw straight away that the people were nicely washed."

"So I said, Mr Shah, you don't understand anything about economic matters."

"Indonesia consists of islands, some of which lie north of the equator, and some south; there is a lot of water in between."

"In Persepolis there is an old castle; I have forgotten its name. It was built by Darius or Xerxes, I don't know exactly."

"At first I did not want to visit Sukarno, he was supposed to be such a terrible man, but then I got to know him, and discovered that he was a fine fellow."

At the end of his 55 minute speech, delivered to the East-Asian Association, he said: "Your applause is not very loud, and it comes a little slowly."

But of course, each state gets the leaders it deserves.

Satisfaction

I have an idea that the West German Government is feeling rather self-satisfied these days that it sacked Hans Krüger, Refugee Minister, with moderate promptitude when the GDR produced documentary evidence that he had been a pretty nasty nazi.

The reason for the satisfaction is that further investigations carried out by the Polish authorities recently show that Krüger was a far nastier nazi than had hitherto emerged.

Let me just recall the facts of the Krüger case. In October 1963, Chancellor Erhard appointed Hans Krüger as Refugee Minister; on December 6th the GDR published Krüger's personal dossier from the nazi files showing that he had been a district nazi boss, and judge at a "Special Court" in occupied Poland; on the same day Bonn spokesmen and Krüger himself denied all the charges, dismissing them as "the usual propaganda attacks"; on January 22nd 1964, Chancellor Erhard sacked Krüger after the charges had been proven true.

Selections

But this was not the end of the story. The Polish authorities continued to investigate Krüger's background, and on June 2nd published a preliminary report. This shows that while Krüger was acting as judge and local nazi official in the little Polish town of Chojnice, he did not confine himself to the "legal" extermination of Poles by finding them guilty and sentencing them to death on trumped-up charges; he also personally "selected" for execution Poles and Jews who had not even been given the farce of a rigged nazi trial. "There is no need for lawyers when we are dealing with Poles, Jews and dogs", was Krüger's regular announcement when carrying out these selections, according to Polish witnesses who survived the war.

The Polish Prosecutor General has forwarded the evidence to Bonn; but I shall be very surprised if anything happens.

Crack

There is a nice crack going round West Germany about Hans-Christoph Seebohm, the much-critised Minister of Transport:

"People say Seebohm is an old nazi. Impossible. The nazis built the autobahns, and they are still fine today. Go and look at one of the roads Seebohm is responsible for. He can't be a nazi."

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